

DELIC NOTES: "Hate Crimes Speak Up!"  
University Community Invitation, Cheryl J. Norton, President, SCSU  
"To Explore Individual and Collective Reactions to Recent Hate Crime/  
Vandalism at SCSU"

Date: Friday, December 5, 2008, 1-2PM

Place: Michael A. Adanti Student Center Theater

DELIC: Co-Chairperson, Marcia Smith Glasper, Director of Diversity and Equity

### Background

During the first meeting of the Diversity and Equity Leadership Council, on December 3, 2008, Co-Chair Glasper asked the members to attend the open meeting called by President Norton to discuss the responses of the university community to the recent hate crime/vandalism, when two students found their automobiles marked with the "N-word" and Swastikas.

Armen Marsoobian, Chair of Philosophy, moderated the discussion. Members of the Ethnic Heritage Center of New Haven, the African American and Jewish Historical Societies of Greater New Haven, and the Campus of Difference Project of the Anti-Defamation League attended, in addition to numerous groups on campus (see [flyer attachment](#))

**President Norton:** SCSU is much more than an "institution." It is a community with a common set of values that celebrates diversity and tolerates difference. On November 21-22, 2008, two student vehicles were defaced with the N-word and swastikas. This cowardly act of hate is an insult to all of us. We are here to quiet the voice of hatred and raise up the voice of love.

**Armen Marsoobian, Chair, Philosophy Dept.:** Academic freedom is an important value, but when a professor receives a paper that displays hatred or "extreme attitudes," the professor should have further conversations with the student.

**Jon Bloch, Professor of Sociology:** Sometimes the racism in students' work is not so blatant. Rather, it is suffused with "blind racism" in its assumptions, world views, and values.

**Student (1):** In this case, the university should further some policy that teaches against prejudice. Hatred comes out of ignorance. What is the university policy?

**Ethnic Heritage Director:** The Ethnic Heritage Center is a wonderful teaching resource that has much material about the histories and relationships among diverse ethnic groups, including Italians, Jews, Ukrainians, Poles, and others.

**Student Body President:** Stunned and upset when he received the email from President Norton. The school should take hate head on, and community can become divided or united when hate incidents happen.

**Brian Johnson, President, Faculty Senate:** Expressed sympathy to the two African American students, and feels anger, sorrow, and perplexity. Higher education is an opportunity to expand the mind, but we exist in a democracy not yet respectful of

difference. It is easier to think this is a freak crime, but it is not. Hate emerges when it is given an opportunity.

**Students (2):** We must work together to end these prejudices.

**McKenzie, SCSU Webmaster:** Wondered if there was a policy or anyone had information about the practice of “racial” (“racist”) branding on campus. (There was no response to this question.)

**James Tait, Professor Environmental Studies:** Republican or Democrat, we should all be proud of the fact that Barack Obama has been elected the next President of the United States. We should also celebrate those who live in racially and ethnically diverse neighborhoods. We need to celebrate our achievements, too.

**Student (3):** Was one of the victims. When it happened, wanted to leave school, go away. Felt alone; no sense of community. Now feels community; commitment to school.

**Students (NAACP):** We are re-active; not pro-active. We need to educate people to know what to say. We are speaking to those who understand. How do we get everyone to come? We need to change our curriculum. I didn’t even know about the African American Historical Society.

**Nicole Henderson, Director, First Year Experience:** Asked students to assist teachers develop helpful materials to teach, said teachers were not necessarily prepared to teach these subjects but would appreciate their input and involvement.

**African American Historical Society:** The victim of the crime needs to speak with the Historical Society, and mandatory tolerance programs are advisable.

**Professor Judy:** Inquired what the Campus of Difference (program sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League) was doing or if they were present.

**Student (4):** Identified as a representative of the Campus of Difference program by raising hand.

**Deborah Savage, Professor of Economics:** All people are capable of hatred, including educated people. Hatred is more than ignorance. We should not be complaisant because we are intellectuals.

**Krystyna Gorniak, Professor of Philosophy:** We should not forget the often small, often undramatic positive things that happen all the time.

**Student (5):** As an RA and Junior, feels students need to be aware of the violence that surrounds Southern in the surrounding communities. There are projects around the campus, and students need to know this.

**Student (6):** Need a more accessible class in African American history. Didn’t even know about the African American Historical Society.

**Student (7):** People need more awareness, and need to form new friendships and not make assumptions. People need to stop making snap judgments and get to know other people.

**Student (8):** Many students in the dorms don’t know how to “do” diversity; how to respond if they have an African American roommate.

**Student (9):** Has learned more from being a college student than in the classroom. People learn from their social experiences and interactions.

**Corinne Blackmer, Professor of English:** Expressed compassion for victim. An open lesbian and Jewish woman, now can marry in CT. Said that ADL (Anti-Defamation League)

and others had seen escalation in hate crimes since election of Barack Obama. Hate groups have three targets: blacks, Jews, and gays. Experiences hate speech regularly as an open lesbian. Believes we need to work together to create a broad based anti-hate campus.

**Student (10):** We need more events on campus that bring us together as a community and that celebrate our differences.

Respectfully Submitted,

Corinne E. Blackmer  
Member, DELC